

Jones' Son Is Charged With 4 Murder Counts In Cult Throat-Slashing

By Charles A. Krause

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GEORGETOWN, Guyana, Dec. 19—Looking haggard and contrite after a night in police custody, the late Rev. Jim Jones' 19-year-old son Stepehn was charged with murder today in the throat-slashings of four Peoples Temple members hours after the mass suicide-murder at Jonestown.

In one more unexpected episode of the Nov. 18 Jonestown tragedy, Jones confessed yesterday to the murders during a tense courtroom confrontation. Carlton Weithers, government prosecutor, Jones was testifying during an inquest to determine whether Charles E. Beigman, a member of the Peoples Temple, will stand trial on charges of actually carrying out the four killings.

Guyanese police have determined Jones was not at the scene of the murder and therefore do not believe he wielded the knife himself. But under Guyanese law, they say, ordering the killings makes him liable to the murder charges.

During Weithers' reexamination yesterday, obviously angered Jones blurted out: "I killed those people and am trying to put it off on Chuck Beikman."

Magistrate Desmond Christian then asked Jones twice whether he meant what he had said, and both times Jones said he did, according to Weithers and a diplomatic observer in the courtroom yesterday when the statement was made.

Christian recessed the hearing and ordered a police investigation. It was understood here today that the police, who already had cleared Jones of involvement in the actual slayings, did not find any additional evidence to support his admission.

Nonetheless, Weithers said before the charges were formally lodged against Jones this morning that the fact that Jones recanted his admission and was obviously agitated when he blurted out his statement does not negate the legal validity of the confession.

Despite Jones' statement, the prosecutor did not dismiss the four counts of murder and one count of attempted murder against Beikman. They simply added Jones as a defendant, charged both with attempting to slash the throat of 8-year-old Stephanie Jones, Jones' niece; and with slashing the throats of Lianne Harris, 22; Martin Amos, 9; Christine Amos, 10, and Linda Sharon Amos, about 42.

Stephanie Jones escaped but the other four, Linda Sharon Amos and her three children, died in the lavatory of a Georgetown house belonging to the Peoples Temple. Linda Sharon Amos was a top aide to the elder Jones before the Jonestown tragedy in which more than 900 persons died.

"I told them (the police) I was mad. It was absurd. I wasn't even there," Jones told reporters today before being taken off to jail.

Christian scheduled the next hearing in the case for Jan. 10.

Hee Ingram, a Peoples Temple leader outside the courtroom, characterized lengthy questioning of Temple survivors by Guyanese police as harassment. At the same time, Ingram said discussions are under way between temple lawyer Rex McKay, a confidant of Guyana's Prime Minister L. F. Burnham, to allow several Peoples Temple members to remain in Guyana rather than return to the United States, where they will undoubtedly be called before a federal grand jury in San Francisco investigating the temple's operations.